

CLAIMS:

1. A vending machine for dispensing bags comprising a housing having an interior and an exterior, a storage compartment for storing bags located in the interior of the housing, a dispensing compartment accessible from the exterior of the housing,
5 suction means positioned to allow movement between the storage compartment and the dispensing compartment, the suction means adapted to grasp the bags stored in the storage compartment, hold the bags during movement and release the bags into the dispenser compartment, and control means to control the movement of the suction means.
- 10 2. The vending machine as defined in claim 1, wherein the vending machine further comprises a means for accepting payment for the bags prior to dispensing the bags, the payment initiating a dispensing cycle once made.
3. The vending machine as defined in claim 1, wherein the machine dispenses at
15 least one type of bags chosen from the group comprising paper bags, woven high density polyethylene bags, calico bags, cloth bags, and bags containing biodegradable material.
4. A vending machine for dispensing paper bags comprising a housing having an interior and an exterior, a storage compartment for storing paper bags located in the interior of the housing, a dispensing compartment accessible from the exterior of the
20 housing, suction means positioned to allow movement between the storage compartment and the dispensing compartment, the suction means adapted to grasp the paper bags stored in the storage compartment, hold the paper bags during movement and release the paper bags into the dispenser compartment, and control means to control the movement of the suction means.
- 25 5. The vending machine according to claim 1 wherein the storage compartment comprises a base, a front wall and an opposed rear wall and two opposed side walls, the base associated with a movable plate positioned above the base which can move up and down.
6. The vending machine according to claim 5 wherein the movable plate is
30 located adjacent the base when the storage compartment is filled and moves upwardly in small increments as bags are dispensed to allow a bag to always be in position for engagement with the suction means until the storage compartment is empty.
7. The vending machine according to claim 1 wherein the storage compartment

comprises more than one storage area each storage area containing different size bags.

8. The vending machine according to claim 1 wherein the bags with which the storage compartment is loaded are disposed in a horizontal, flattened position.

9. The vending machine according claim 1 wherein an access door is provided to the dispensing compartment, and the access door is only opened as a part of a dispensing cycle and the dispensing cycle does not operate while the access door is opened.

10. The vending machine according to claim 1 wherein the suction means is associated with a guide means to allow easy movement between the storage and the dispenser compartments.

11. The vending machine according to claim 1 wherein the control means is associated with a means for accepting payment for the bags to allow the control means to start the dispensing cycle once the payment has been made.

12. The vending machine according to claim 1 wherein the control means include a communication means with a digital counting means allowing monitoring of the level of inventory of bags in a vending machine from a remote location.

13. A method for dispensing bags from a vending machine comprising the steps of providing a plurality of bags in a storage compartment, accepting payment for the bags from a user, operating a suction means positioned to allow movement between the storage compartment and a dispensing compartment to grasp the bags stored in the storage compartment, the suction means holding the bags during movement and the suction means releasing the bags into the dispenser compartment for collection by the user.

14. The vending machine according to claim 1 further comprising an information screen located on a front portion of the machine capable of playing prerecorded messages such as information messages about the damage caused by disposable plastic bags.